

666
T W O

S E R M O N S

Preach'd at

St. PAUL's, DEPTFORD, KENT,

On *June* 24, 1745; and *June* 30, 1746.

Before a Select Number of GENTLEMEN,

Who stile themselves

The Order of *UBIQUARIANS*.

By *JAMES BATE*, M. A. *H.*

Rector and Lecturer of *St. Paul's, Deptford.*



L O N D O N :

Printed in the Year M.DCC.XLVI.

63



TO THE
BRETHREN

Of the Right Worthy and Amicable ORDER of
UBIQUARIANS.

Right Worthy and Amicable Brethren,

AS you honoured me with the Task of drawing up the Preamble, Statutes, and Forms of your Order, it would ill become me to commend your Constitution; could I not with Truth and Justice say, that every Thing contrary to Religion, Sobriety, good Manners, and good Sense, is more effectually excluded your Society, by the Virtue and Prudence of its Members, than it is capable of being by any Laws or Regulations whatever. 'Tis this that will always make me reflect with Pleasure upon the many entertaining Hours of innocent Mirth, and agreeable Conversation, I have passed among you; as well as upon the valuable Friendships I have contracted, by becoming a Brother of your ORDER. And 'tis this that makes me hope, that as you have, upon all publick Occasions, so unanimously expressed the most kind and candid Sense of my past Labours for the Regulation of your Society; so—that what I here offer you in the Capacity of a Preacher, will meet with equal Success, by influencing both your Affections and Practice. If, by God's Blessing, I can attain

DEDICATION.

tain that happy End, it will give me the highest and most rational Satisfaction and Pleasure: because the Hopes of contributing, some way or other, to your spiritual Advantage, was by no Means the least Motive I had, to become a Member of your Society at first. Therefore, if these Endeavours are but blest with Success, it will ever be my great Delight to subscribe myself,

Right Worthy and Amicable Brethren,

Your affectionate Brother,

and humble Servant,

St. Paul's Deptford,
Aug. 1, 1746.

JAMES BATE.



*The Faith and Practice of a Christian, the only
true Foundation of rational Liberty.*

A

S E R M O N

Preach'd at ST. PAUL's, Deptford,
on June 24. 1745.

J O H N viii. ver. 36.

*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye
shall be free indeed.*



THE divine Wisdom and Goodness having
formed this World into a kind of a prodigious
Theatre, and made Mankind the Spectators;
'tis no wonder that every Object, both of Art
and Nature, should be capable of administring
useful Matter of Speculation to a Mind *rightly*
disposed. And of all other kinds of Objects, perhaps the most
useful, if not the most entertaining Speculations may be drawn
from that prodigious Variety of political or civil Institutions,
that are to be met with up and down the World.

B

Useful
Hints

Hints and good Examples may be drawn from *some*; and Cautions equally useful, may be learn'd from others: from the one we may be instructed what to *practice*, and from the other what to *avoid*. In pursuance of this way of thinking, it shall be my present Business to endeavour to see what useful Matter of Speculation can be drawn from the *Name* and *Nature* of *this* Society, or Band of private Friendship, in which *we*, my Brethren, here present, are thus agreeably and happily united. So that by God's Blessing, this Institution, which was originally intended for little more than to unbend the Mind by innocent Mirth and Conversation, may happily be improved thereby into a real, solid, lasting, and most noble *spiritual* Advantage. And give me leave to say it, that if we can happily mix so much Utility, with that which affords us all so much innocent Satisfaction and Pleasure,—we shall then carry a noble Point indeed. To this end, 'tis my Intention at present, to lay before you the *Means* of attaining the true and proper *Freedom* of a *rational Agent*. For as the *Name* of this friendly Society carries with it an *Idea* of *Freedom* or *Liberty*;—I think I cannot better employ the present Moments, than in shewing you how to become in *reality*, what we are in *Name*; to teach you, how to arrive at what our Name implies; I mean the Possession of true *rational* Freedom or Liberty, *properly* so called: and which indeed is also the noblest Acquisition, and most invaluable Property of every reasonable Creature. 'Tis with this View that I have pitch'd upon the Words now read to you: *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed*. That is, “Would you attain to the true and proper Freedom of rational Creatures, you must arrive at it by the Faith and Practice of that Religion, which the Son of God came down from Heaven to teach us.”

THE Words are a part of St. *John's* Gospel: a Book, which, of all the four *Evangelists*, requires to be read with the greatest Attention; as being, I think, the hardest to be truly understood. The Scope and Origin of the Words, I apprehend to be briefly this. Our Lord had been discoursing

to the Jews, about the Thralldom and Slavery of Sin; but *they*, grossly misapprehending his Meaning, replied, that they were Slaves in *no* respect, because they were all the free born Sons of *Abraham*. But our Lord informed them, that the Slavery *he* spoke of, that is, the Slavery of Sin, was what no Descent from even the noblest and most high-born Ancestors, could possibly exempt them from. And he yet further, but obscurely—hints to them, that neither their Descent from *Abraham*, nor even their Attachment to the *Mosaic* Rites could procure them the Freedom *he* spoke of, because the *Mosaic* Œconomy was only subservient to a nobler Dispensation; namely—that of the Son of God, which should remain for ever. And this I apprehend to be the Scope of the Verse which comes immediately before the Text:—“And the Servant abideth not in the House for ever; but the Son abideth for ever.” And then it follows,—“if the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” In discoursing upon the Words, I propose,

1st, To shew you, wherein the *true* and *real* Freedom of every *reasonable* Creature consists.

2^{dly}, I shall endeavour to evince, that this true and real Freedom of a rational Agent, is only to be gained by the Faith and Practice of a *Christian*.

CONCLUDING with a Word or two, suitable to the Occasion of our present Meeting.

BUT first, I am to state the Notion of the true Freedom of a rational Agent. And I define it thus. “True Freedom in general, consists in an Opportunity, Power, and Convenience of exercising the natural Faculties upon their respective proper Objects, according to the unconstrained or unbiassed Determination of the Agents Mind.” Consequently, such Freedom is capable of various Degrees, in proportion to

the Number and Acuteness of the natural Faculties, considered together with the Opportunity and Power of exercising them upon their proper Objects. For the more numerous and acute the Faculties are, and the greater Opportunities we have of employing them,—so far forth the Field of Action is enlarged. Hence it follows, that true Freedom does not consist in acting so as to *destroy* the natural Faculties; because such Destruction of them does of course prevent all future use of them. Therefore such an Abuse of Liberty tends to the very reverse of it; *viz.* to produce Thralldom and Slavery. And so indeed does every Action which *impairs* our Faculties; it being evident that so far forth as our natural Faculties are curtailed or impaired, just so far is our Field of Action also shortened and diminish'd; and the Agent is of course brought so much nearer and nearer to the State of a Prisoner or a Slave, as the Scene or Field of his Action is confined, limited, or contracted. 'Tis much the same when we *misapply* our Faculties, by exerting them on such improper Objects as were never designed to *correspond* with them: as if a Man, for instance, should so far dote as to discourse to a Brute or a Tree: because all such Misapplication of the natural Faculties, is properly a ceasing to make use of them. And whoever does *that*, does voluntarily streighten and diminish his own Field of Action; and indeed builds a Prison for himself. For never to *use* or *exert* a Faculty, is the next thing to the not having it; consequently, all *Misapplication* of the Faculties to improper Objects, is in fact, more or less, a Diminution of the Liberty of the Agent. From hence, you see, it follows by a plain Deduction, that the Man who either *destroys*, or *impairs*, or *misapplies* his natural Faculties on improper Objects, *that* Man does more or less either enslave himself, or curtail the Field of his Action. For, if true Freedom, as I have already proved to you, does consist in an Opportunity, Power, and Convenience of exercising our natural Faculties upon their respective proper Objects, according to the free Determination of the Agents Mind, it follows, that whatever curtails those Opportunities or Faculties; or destroys or misapplies them,

them, that same thing must be the Bane and Destruction of the true Liberty of a *rational Agent*.

By this Train of Reasoning we are naturally led to the following two-fold *Quære*. What are our natural Faculties capable of; and what are those proper Objects to which we should direct them? 'Tis plain our natural Faculties were all given us by our Maker, as Instruments wherewith the restless Activity of the Soul is to employ itself. Now, who is there, in point of common Sense, so proper to explain the Use and Intent of the several Parts of a *Machine*, as the original *Maker* and *Inventer* of it? God alone was the Maker of our Souls and Bodies;—he alone was the wise and bounteous Giver of all their Powers and Faculties: therefore *he* only knows *how* those Faculties may be most improved, and *where* they may be best exerted:—'tis he alone who made both *them*, and the Objects that correspond *with* them, that can tell us what those Objects are, which he originally intended should answer to, and tally with, those Faculties. Now it appears evidently from all the natural and revealed Notices we have received from *him*, that the Soul (if not too much attach'd to sensual Objects) is capable of infinite Improvements, and of making an infinite Progress in Delights of a *spiritual* Nature;—and that *those* only can fully satisfy the Demands of an *immaterial* and *immortal* Spirit. From *his* holy Word we learn, that the Contemplation of God and Goodness, and the Practice of Religion and Virtue, are the proper Objects for which the Soul was originally intended; and that every other Application of the rational Faculties is an Abuse of them, and consequently destructive of the true Liberty of a reasonable Creature. A Point this, which necessarily brings me to my next general Head: under which I am to shew,

2dly, THAT the true and proper Freedom of a *rational Agent*, is only to be gained by the Faith and Practice of a *Christian*.

I shall endeavour to evince this by an Enumeration of as many Particulars, as the shortness of the present Time will permit: Considering how far the true Freedom of the Soul is promoted, first by the *Faith*, and secondly by the *Practice* of a Christian. First then, by a true Christian Faith, we are set free from the Fetters of blind Superstition. Superstition has always been looked upon as a *Narrowness of Soul in Religion*; consequently, it is no small Addition to the true Liberty of the Soul, to be set free from the slavish Bands of it. And indeed the human Soul being naturally of a religious Cast, Superstition always has, and always will, more or less, grow like a Weed in those Hearts where sound, rational, and true Religion never was planted. To have a right Notion how slavish those Bands of Superstition are, and how necessarily they are connected with *political* as well as *spiritual* Slavery,—we need only cast our Eyes on those ancient or modern Nations where the Light of Christianity either never shone, or is but dimly seen. In those Countries where Christianity is but imperfectly profest, we see that Superstition in the Church, and Tyranny and arbitrary Power in the State, go always hand in hand together, and upon all Occasions lovingly support each other. Thus *Popery* can never maintain its Ground, without the Help of civil *Tyranny*; nor can *Tyranny* hold long in any civilized Country, without the friendly Aid of Superstition in the Church. But if we turn our Eyes to those Countries where the Gospel never shone, what amazing and shocking Barbarities, as well as Follies and Absurdities, have Men been led into by the baneful Influence of Superstition. The several Instances of this, need not be told to those who have any Acquaintance with Ancient or Modern History; and those who have none, would hardly believe them were they to hear them. And to this Hour, even here among our own Countrymen, what ridiculous and slavish Fears do People of a superstitious Cast, for ever torment themselves with, by their *Omens* and *Prodigies*, *Signs* and *Tokens* of this and that Piece of bad Luck;—their lucky and unlucky Days, and all their idle
Dreams

Dreams and Forebodings: to that Degree, that many are made miserable by every Branch of that very Frame of Nature, which God created for our Comfort and Support. From these narrow-soul'd Whimsies are we set free, only by a true Christian Faith; which gives us the most generous and exalted Notions of God, and tells us that he is best pleased—not with the superstitious, mean and slavish, but with the *rational* Service of his *rational* Creatures. Thus does Christianity promote the proper Liberty of the Soul, by loosing the slavish Bands of Superstition; by assuring us that *all Things work together for Good, to them that love God*;—that the whole Frame of Nature is ever guided and directed by the infinite Wisdom and Power of that God, who is our best Friend and greatest Benefactor; whose Providence is so carefully extended over all his Creatures, that not so much as a *Sparrow falleth to the Ground* without his Permission;—and by whom the very *Hairs of our Head are all number'd*.

AGAIN: If Knowledge be properly an Enlargement of the Soul, how is the Soul of a Christian enlarged by a just and right *Idea* both of God and its own self? Of God the *noblest*—and of itself—the most *interesting* of all the Objects of Contemplation. By Christian Faith the Soul is enlarged with a View of the principal Aims and Ends of Providence, from the *Creation* to the *Dissolution* of the Universe; for God Almighty in his holy Word has made us Partakers of his inmost Secrets, and admitted us into his Councils; as far I mean as we can possibly be concerned to know them, or can possibly comprehend them. Thence we learn the Mystery of the adorable *Trinity*, in order to teach us the Obligations we are under to each of the three blessed Persons, for the Share which each respectively had, in bringing about the Work of our Redemption. And as from hence we learn the Nature of our beneficent invisible Friends and Benefactors, so from hence only *do*—or *can* we learn—the Envy, Power and Malice of our invisible Enemies the fallen Angels; the Ways to counterplot them, and that *eternal Weight of Glory* with which our Victory over them will

will be rewarded hereafter. From thence only do we learn what infinite Happiness, or unspeakable Misery, awaits us hereafter, according as we think proper in *this* State of Probation, to qualify ourselves for either *Heaven* or *Hell*. So noble and so interesting is the Knowledge with which the Soul of Man is enlarged by Christian Faith. Let us now see how far the true and proper Freedom of a reasonable Creature is promoted—by the *Practice* of a Christian.

Now, by the *Practice* of Christianity, the Soul is freed from the Dominion and *Slavery* of Sin. I call it *Slavery*, because the Practice of all Sin is in its own Nature destructive of all the noble Faculties of the Soul; whereby its proper Field of Action is contracted and diminished; and consequently it is so far thrown into a true and proper State of *Slavery and Thralldom*. For when we stoop to the Practice of any sort of Immorality, Vice or Sensuality;—the high-born Soul, quite forgetting its divine Original, is pinned down and confined to the narrow Round of a few dirty, base and scandalous Actions, each of them diametrically opposite to true and real *Freedom*. For though the Man knows before hand that these Actions are wrong;—that they give no *lasting* Pleasure;—but always end in tormenting the Conscience, as well as palling the Appetite;—yet by Degrees he is so enslaved to them, as to be forced upon them even *contrary* to the Dictates of his own Judgment, Reason and Conscience. And if this be not *Slavery*, no *Egyptian Bondage* ever was. For 'tis *Reason* and not *Appetite*, that constitutes *the Man*; when therefore Reason is led Captive by Appetite, then of course the *Man* becomes *enslaved* to the *Brute*. Hereby in Process of Time the Soul, is, as it were, imprisoned in the Carcase of a Beast;—and by its own vicious Courses, is chained up in a Body which may properly enough be stiled the Mad-house of a *Demoniacal* Spirit. Again, how does the Practice of each carnal Sin abate the Vigour of the Imagination, and tie it down to a few dirty worthless Objects; till the Soul, that sprightly Spark of Life and Immortality, sinks down at length into a heavy putrid Lump; growing in
Time

Time so inactive dull and stupid, that 'tis fitter to be called a Principle of Death than Life. Hence in Scripture this sinful degenerate State of the Soul is called *Death*, and *Death eternal*. And most proper is that Name; for if *Life* denotes a State in which we have the proper Enjoyment of our natural Faculties, —surely, that State of Lethargy, Blindness and Insensibility, into which the Soul is brought by sinful Habits, may properly be stiled a *State of Death*. For if a bare Separation of Soul and Body deserves the Name of *Death*, how infinitely more does the Separation of the Soul from all its noble Faculties, deserve that dreaded Name. In a Word, the Man enslaved by Sin, wears every Mark and Badge of *Slavery*: For though he can brave Heaven, yet he dares not deny himself the Gratification of one single Lust. Nay, he is often forced to obey different and disagreeing Masters; being frequently hurried by the *Devil* upon Sins of so contrary Natures, that one Passion *must* repine at the Gratification of another. Thus, a Man's Pride may contend with his Lust; his Drunkenness, may defeat both; and his Avarice may fall hard upon all three: till at length he verifies with a Vengeance that saying of the *Prophet*, "the Wicked is like the troubled Sea that cannot rest." Again, so hard and severe a Tyrant is *Satan*, that even *old Age* does not free his Votaries from the Yoak; for they are perpetually spurred on to Sin, even after the Power of sinning is worn out and decayed. In the Case, for Instance, of the old debauched Voluptuary; where *Satan* never fails to play the Part of a truly *Egyptian Taskmaster*, by requiring Brick without Straw. 'Tis to no Purpose to say the Sinner does not *perceive* his Slavery; for no more does the Beast he rides on *perceive* (or rather *reflect* upon) *his*: But turn the Horse into a Man, and he'd soon perceive the Difference; and so would the Sinner too, if he *could* or *would* but convert himself into a *Saint*. Such, my Brethren, is the Slavery of Sin: A Slavery, you see, both active and passive; active, in forcing us upon Actions *contrary* to the Dictates of our own Reason and Conscience;—and *passive*, in that it quite bereaves the Soul of all its valuable Faculties,

ties, thereby contracting and diminishing its proper Field of Action. From these slavish Bands of *Satan* nothing can set us free, but the Practice of Christianity: Which concludes what I proposed to make good under my second general Head; *viz.* that the true and proper Freedom of a *rational Agent*, is to be gained only by the Faith and Practice of a *Christian*. I come now, therefore, to conclude with a Word or two, suitable to the Occasion of our present Meeting; which is intended to shew a decent and proper Regard to God's Worship, by an annual and solemn Attendance upon it, all in a Body. In what I have further to say, I shall confine myself wholly to such Hints as I am furnished with, first from *the general Frame of our Constitution*, and secondly from the *Name* we have thought proper to distinguish ourselves by.

As to *the general Frame of our Constitution*, it is, I think, no Secret, that we derive it from one of the bravest Nations of Antiquity—the ancient *Romans*. Therefore, as we copy *their* Plan of Government, let us also endeavour to copy the good Qualities for which *they* were chiefly renowned. The old *Romans*, were, in general, remarkable for making the best Use of the bare unassisted Light of Nature, perhaps of any Nation upon Earth. Accordingly, their wise Use of that invaluable Talent, was blessed with the fairest and the widest Empire, that the World yet ever saw; they becoming thereby the Instruments in the Hands of God, of taming and civilizing all the *then* barbarous, but *now* most polished Nations of the North and West. Let us consider, that God has blest *us* with the same natural Light that he gave *them*, and blest *us* also with something more; I mean the Light of the Christian Gospel. Let *us* therefore, by embracing the Freedom tendered *us* in the Text, endeavour to manage *our* two-fold Light, as well as *they* did *their* single one, the Light of Nature. And if we do,—as *our* Task is more glorious, *so* much more glorious will our Reward be also. 'Twas *theirs*—to conquer, tame, and civilize fierce and savage Nations. *Ours* is a much more glorious Task; 'tis to conquer, tame and civilize *our*

own

own fierce and savage Passions, Vices and Inclinations. And we may plead the Authority of even one of their own Poets, that this is a far nobler Atchievement than *can* be performed by the Sword. *Fortior est qui se quam qui fortissima vincit Mænia*; says he. Which looks like a literal Translation of those Words of Solomon in Prov. xvi. *He that ruleth his own Spirit, is better than he that taketh a City.* And as the Warfare of a Christian is of a nobler kind, so is the Reward of his Bravery, of a much more exalted Nature. For alas! how can the *Mural, Naval, Civic*, or even the *Triumphal* Crowns of ancient Rome, be compared with that never-fading Crown of Righteousness, which God the righteous Judge shall give us at *that* Day. Nay, what was the Empire *they* obtained by all their Policy, Art and Bravery, if compared with that *Inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven* for those whom *the Son of God makes free*: An Inheritance never to be wrested from them by an Inundation of any *Savage, Gothic or Barbarian* Enemy. But the Nature of this Reward leads me to wind up all, with a Hint with which I am naturally furnished, from the *Name* by which we of this friendly Society have thought proper to distinguish ourselves.

OUR Name implies, as has been observed, *perfect Freedom and Detachment from all Kind of Slavery or Confinement.* Now 'tis reasonable to imagine, (and I think there are Hints in Scripture that justify it,)--that in the happy State hereafter; our glorified Bodies will be absolved from the present Laws of Gravitation, which now pin them down to this narrow Spot of Earth; so that the Spirits of the Happy will be at free Liberty to dart themselves, as quick as Thought, to any distant Point of the Universe. And what an exalted Pleasure must it give each happy Spirit, to make itself acquainted hereby, with that prodigious Variety of Nature, Art and Providence, with which those distant Worlds that compose the Universe, do most certainly abound! What an amazing Variety of Speculation, do the several Parts of this Earth afford us, both historical, natural, and providential! I say, even this

C 2

little

little Earth we tread on; which yet is so inconsiderable and trivial a Part of the Universe, that to an human Eye placed in the Sun, it would be absolutely invifible. Again, fo *nume- rous*, and fo diftant both from *us* and *each other* must fome of thofe folar Systems be, that what a certain great Aftronomer fupposes, is very poffible;—*viz.* that the Light of fome of them, notwithstanding the amazing Swiftnefs with which it moves, may have been travelling towards our Earth, ever fince the Creation of it, though not yet arrived at our Eyes. Judge therefore, my Brethren, what an infinite Variety of Speculation, Pleasure and Admiration, it must give each curious and happy Spirit, to wander at large through fuch an amazing Diversity of Wonders; even through an Infinity of Worlds, where the Wifdom, Power and Goodnefs of the Creator, has moft undoubtedly fhewn itfelf in as furprizing a Variety of Forms. Let me tell you, Brethren, that to visit *theſe*, will be—to fly, where no Roman Eagles ever flew:—No, to partake of Speculations fuch as *theſe*, will be the happy Fate of thofe only, who fhall here embrace the Service of *that* God, whoſe Service is the moft compleat and perfect Freedom. And if we, my Brethren, deſire to be *in reality*, and *in very deed*, what *now* we only are *in Name*, we muſt arrive at it by the Faith and Practice of a Chriſtian, and by *that* alone: *The Son muſt make us free, if we would be free indeed.* For while thofe who here on Earth enſlave themſelves to Sin and Satan, ſhall be *kept in everlaſting Chains under Darknefs*; on t’other Hand, *theſe* will be the Rewards of fuch happy Spirits, as *now* wiſely make themſelves Partakers of the *glorious Liberty of the Sons of God*. To thofe happy Realms of Blifs may our own good Lives and innocent Converſation, bring us all at laſt, through the Merits and Mediation of Chriſt Jeſus our Saviour. To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed, as is moſt juſtly due, all Honour and Glory, Might, Majeſty and Dominion, now and for ever more. *Amen.*





Human Learning useful to true Religion.

A

S E R M O N

Preach'd at ST. PAUL's, *Deptford*,
on *June 30. 1746.*

A C T S vii. ver. 22.

— *And Moses was learned in all the
Wisdom of the Egyptians.*

BEING desirous, as often as I appear before you in the Capacity of a Preacher, to entertain you with some Speculation suitable either to the *Name* or *Nature* of this friendly Society; I have therefore pitch'd upon the Words now read to you. They are a Compliment upon the Use and Advantage of human Learning; a Compliment

Compliment bestowed upon it, even by the holy Spirit itself. The Subject therefore which I have chosen for our Meditations at present, shall be — the great Use and Advantage of human Learning to the Cause of true Religion. Nor can I think of any thing more proper to be laid before this Society, than an Essay on the manifold Uses and Advantages of Learning and Knowledge in general, for these two Reasons. First, because the very Plan of our Constitution, being taken from one of the most considerable Nations of Antiquity, some share at least of human Learning is requisite, to make us rightly understand even our own private *Laws* and *Regulations*. But, secondly, and principally, a Dissertation upon the Uses and Advantages of human Learning, must at *all* times be most fit and proper for *us* of this friendly Society, because it tends to make us become in Truth and Reality, that which we are *by Name*. For all Learning and Knowledge in general, may, with great Propriety of Speech, be said to confer a kind of *Ubiquity* upon the Soul of Man; by enabling it at *any* time, to dart itself, with equal Ease and Pleasure, thro' the amazing Wonders both of Art and Nature. Knowledge is that true and proper Enlargement of the human Soul, whereby 'tis qualified to emerge, as it were, and to be new-born, or ushered into ancient Times; and to become like a Party concerned in ancient Transactions. 'Tis *this* that enables us to review—not only those Wonders of God's Providence that are recorded in *Histories*, but also the most curious Wonders of *Nature*, so wisely displayed, and so benevolently diversified for the Use of the Creatures, in foreign Countries and in distant Climes. A Dissertation, therefore, upon that which thus enlarges the human Soul in general, and which alone can make *us* of this Society to be in *Nature*, what we are in *Name*, cannot, I think, but be a fit and proper Subject of our Meditation at *this* Season: more especially if I can but evince, (as I shall *endeavour* to do) that even *all* human Learning is most *useful*, as well as ornamental, to that sacred Profession of the Christian Faith, which

which alone can make us truly happy, either here or hereafter.

THE Words are those of the first *Martyr St. Stephen*; when he was apprehended, and brought Prisoner before the *Jewish Sanhedrim*, for professing the Faith of Christ. And they were delivered by him at a Time when he was so full of the miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghost, that "all that sat in the Council," says the sacred Historian, "looking stedfastly on him, saw his Face, as it had been the Face of an Angel." The holy Martyr, in the Course of his Oration to the *Sanhedrim*, having Occasion to speak of *Moses*, who, when he was cast out, and exposed upon the Waters of the *Nile*, was taken up by King *Pharoah's* Daughter, and by her educated in the Royal Court as her own Son,—he adds, "and *Moses* was learned in all the Wisdom of the *Egyptians*." In treating on which Words, I shall observe,

1st, THAT a very high Compliment is here paid by the inspired Martyr, to *all* human Learning in general.

2^{dly}, I shall endeavour to evince, that this *Encomium* was both wise and just: Because all human Learning in general, more especially all true and real Knowledge, is of the highest Use to the Cause of Christianity.

CONCLUDING with a few Observations from the whole,—some of them not unsuitable, I hope, to the Occasion of our present Meeting.

1st THEN, I am to observe, that the Words of my Text are a very high *Encomium* upon human Learning and Knowledge in general. For 1st, this *Encomium* is bestowed by the Holy Ghost itself: And 2^{dly}, the Learning it was bestowed upon, was absolutely human Learning, and no Part of it divine. Now, if the heavenly Wisdom counted it an Accomplishment

plishment—even in such a Man as *Moses*, that he made himself a Master of the *Egyptian* Learning; surely *all* human Learning, by the same Rule, must be highly useful and commendable in *all* Men. 'Tis very observable, that as *St. Stephen* was wrongully accused of Irreverence towards *Moses* and *the Law*; in order therefore to wipe off that Accusation, and to shew how high an Esteem he had, for so sacred a Person, so fine a Scholar, and so great a Prophet, as *Moses* certainly was;—he therefore mentions his skill in the human Learning of the *Egyptians*—as a *Commendation* of him. Now therefore, I argue; if human Learning be so commendable in itself, that it was looked upon, even by the Holy Ghost, as an Accomplishment in such a Man as *Moses*, even in *Moses* who was so renowned for so many higher Accomplishments than any human Knowledge;—it follows, that all Learning and Knowledge, tho' purely human, must be commendable in *all* Men. For sure, there must be at least *something* valuable, in that which is thus highly prized by the heavenly Wisdom itself, and counted a shining Part of the Character—even of *Moses* himself. And what was this,—but Learning purely human; it was—the Wisdom of the *Egyptians*.—And wherein that Wisdom consisted, will appear partly from Scripture, but more largely from the heathen Writers.

Now, such was the Richness and Fertility of *Egypt*, that soon after the Flood, it drew an early Colony of Inhabitants, to till and enjoy the Fruits of so fine a Country. *Egypt* may therefore justly boast of a Politeness of very high Antiquity. Again, the Security of its Situation from foreign Foes, and the undoubted Excellency of its civil Polity, which secured it from domestic Wars and Troubles, gave the Inhabitants of *Egypt* such long and uninterrupted Times of Peace, that, as they had great Abilities, and much Curiosity, so, they had also great Leisure and Encouragement to apply themselves to Arts and Sciences. Accordingly, even as high as *Abraham's* Time, the *Arts*, and consequently the *Sciences* of *Egypt*,
were

were advanced to a very great Height: for they had a rich and magnificent Court, attended by numerous Princes and Nobles. And I link the Arts and Sciences together, because 'tis hardly possible to conceive these, in any Country to exist separately. For, where *Arts* and *Handicrafts* are low and mean,—there,—*Sciences* will always be at a low Ebb. And again, where *Sciences* are low and trivial, *there*—*Handicrafts* will, generally, be rude and mean likewise. And the Reason is plain; for *Arts* administer to the *Sciences*; and the *Sciences*, in return, improve all *Arts* and *Handicrafts*. I argue therefore, that as the Grandeur and Magnificence of the Courts of the ancient Kings of *Egypt*, was very great; *this* was a sure Mark that *Arts*, and consequently *Sciences*, had long flourished among them; and were doubtless increased to a great Degree, by the Time that *Moses* was born.

As to the Heathen Accounts of *Egypt*, they are *modern* in Comparison to those of *Moses*. For *Herodotus* (that *Father of History*, as *Cicero* calls him) did not write 'till above a thousand Years after *Moses*: And yet, he is the ancientest Heathen extant, that has written about the *Egyptian* Affairs. From *him* and others, who had travelled among the *Egyptians*, it appears, I must confess, that much of their Learning *was* indeed trifling, much of it very dark and obscure, and very uncertain; a great deal of it conversant about the Whimfies of *Magic*, *Witchcraft*, *Omens* and *Prodigies*; and their *History* in general, ridiculously false and extravagant, as any *modern Romance*. But still, it must be allowed on t'other Hand, that many useful Branches of *true* and *real* Learning, were absolutely discovered and invented by this same People. Such for Instance was *Geometry*, or the Art of measuring plain Surfaces; such was *Chronology*, its Sister Science *Astronomy*, and such were all the other *Mathematic Sciences*. They excelled also in *Architecture*, and greatly so in *Physic*. In which latter Science they were so curious and exact, that, as *Herodotus* tells us, no Physician was allowed to practise upon more

D

than

than one Distemper, that the Science being divided into so many Branches, each of them might be the more thoroughly understood: which was the Reason, that almost every Man studied some *one* Branch of that noble Science. 'Tis plain too, that all those useful Sciences, were borrowed, partly indeed from *Phanicia*, but principally from out of *Egypt*, by the *Greeks*; from the *Greeks* they came to the *Romans*, and from the *Romans* to *us*, and all other civilized Countries in Christendom. Such were the Branches of Learning, in which *Moses* must have been instructed, if he was skilled in all the Wisdom of the *Egyptians*. For though the Distance of Time between *Moses* and *Herodotus* was very great, yet 'tis certain that their Learning even in *Herodotus's* Time, was extremely ancient, and had been transmitted from Father to Son, among their Priests, from Time immemorial, and was therefore certainly much older than *Moses*.

Now, though all the *Egyptian* Learning was indeed confined to their Priests; yet it must be understood that their Kings and their Nobles were of the priestly Profession: the Nobleman and the Priest, among the ancient *Egyptians*, being convertible Terms, and used promiscuously the one for the other; to denote one and the same Profession, which was always hereditary also. And this accounts for *Manetho*, an ancient *Egyptian* Writer now lost, calling *Moses* (as *Josephus* assures us he did) a Priest of *Heliopolis* in *Egypt*. Now, a Nobleman *Moses* had certainly been, by his Education in the Court of *Pharaoh*; the King's Courts, in those Days being their principal Schools of Knowledge, to which only their Kings, and their Priests or Nobles, were admitted: which might easily make *Manetho* mistake *Moses* for an *Egyptian* Priest, the Priest and the Nobleman, having in those Days, as I observed, been convertible Terms, as denoting much the same Thing. 'Tis plain therefore from all this, that what the Holy Ghost here commends as an Accomplishment in *Moses*, was human Learning, and human Learning only: and I believe we may

may take it as a general Rule, that whenever human Learning is at all condemned, or spoken against, in Scripture, 'tis meant only so far forth, as 'tis set up in *Opposition* to the Gospel; but not when 'tis put to its only proper Use, and made a *Handmaid* to wait upon, and adorn, the *Christian Faith*. Which naturally brings me in the

2d Place, to evince, that the *Encomium* bestowed upon human Learning, by the Words of the Text, was both wise and just: because, all human Learning in general, more especially all true and real Knowledge, is of the greatest Use and Advantage to the Cause of Christianity.

For 1st, This is very evident, that no Man can properly admire God's Wisdom, Goodness and Mercy, in the Works of his Creation, who does not understand those Laws of Nature, by which the wonderful Machine of the Universe, is governed and directed. Now, 'tis the professed Design of that noblest Part of human Learning — the *Mathematic Sciences*, to apprise us of the infinite Glories of that divine Being, who has made all Things, as the wise Man observes, by *Number, Weight, and Measure*. The human Body is called the *Microcosm* or little World; the whole of it being thought, to resemble in its Oeconomy—the *Κόσμος*, or System of the Universe. The wonderful Contrivance of this *Microcosm* or human Body, did once so strike the Imagination of the great and famous Physician *Galen*, who was yet no more than a poor Heathen, that he could not forbear crying out in a Rapture, that the bare Description of a human Body, was even a Hymn to the Creator. And did poor *Galen* think so? Did Skill in Physic, Surgery and Anatomy, make even a poor Heathen sing so fine a *Psalms* to the Honour of his Creator? How comes it then to pass, that even a superior Skill in the same Sciences, should, in these enlightened Ages, suffer the Expression of *Religio Medici*, to become even a proverbial Jest. But 'tis to be hoped that this Complaint will be re-

moved, and that, as the Improvements of Mankind in Arts and Sciences formerly, did pave a Way for *natural* Religion; —so—the growing Wisdom, Learning and Experience of the World, 'tis be hoped will level all Obstructions, and prepare a Way for a general Reception of a much nobler Religion than the Religion of Nature; even for the Doctrines and Precepts of Christianity. For the Religion of Nature is only common Sense; while Christianity is common Sense improved, aided, assisted, enlightened, informed, and directed to the noblest Means, and those Means conducive to the noblest Ends; even the highest Degrees of an eternal Happiness, ever growing and increasing.

AND as *natural* Knowledge, or the *Mathematic Sciences*, enable a Man to discover and adore the Creator; so do they qualify us to find out and detect his Opposite, the Devil: for they teach us to distinguish between the Works of God, and the Doings of *Satan*. He that is skilled in the Laws of Nature, and the Mathematic Sciences, he, I say, and *he only* can distinguish between the *true* and *real* Miracles, of a *true* and *real* *Messiah*, and the lying Wonders of a counterfeit *Magician*. What Wonders might a Man skilled in *Optics*, work amongst an ignorant and savage Nation, by Means of what they call a *Magic Lanthorn*; or by the Help of those newly discovered Properties of *Electricity*, with which the Curious are now so agreeably entertained? To an uncultivated and savage Nation, a Man so provided with a moderate *Apparatus* of Instruments, might pass for any Thing; might even pretend to eclipse the Sun by his *own* Power, when at the same Time he only foresees it by a Calculation. And this may account for the pretended Wonders of some ancient Magicians, who vaunted they could bring the Moon down from Heaven, remove whole Fields, and make the Mountains dance. Why all this we know, may now be done at any time, to all sensible Appearance—only by a *Telescope*. Natural Knowledge, I therefore argue, will easily teach us to distinguish between *such* Feats, and

and the raising the Dead; the curing the Blind, the Deaf, the Dumb, by a Word or a Touch, and the eclipsing the Sun, without the Intervention of the Moon, as it happened at our Lord's Crucifixion; these, I say, will easily be distinguished by the Help of natural Knowledge, from those other, which are no more than natural Operations. In a Word, it was this want of natural Knowledge, the want of—*rerum cognoscere causas*, that made the ancient *Jews* and *Heathens* pay so little Regard to the Miracles of Jesus Christ, and his Apostles: Miracles that would soon have converted them to the Faith, had natural Knowledge been better and more universally understood by them.

BUT there is another Branch of human Learning, without which Christianity can hardly rest upon a rational Foundation: and that is, *History*. For the *Greek* and *Roman Historians* afford us the noblest Proofs of our Religion, by recording and allowing the Truth of those Miracles and Prophecies, upon which our Religion is founded. By the help of these heathen Enemies, we slay our Adversaries even with their own Swords: For their own Confessions are enough, and more than enough, to establish Christianity to a degree of Demonstration. For as long as it will be either good Sense, or fair Reasoning, to alledge the Concessions of our bitterest Adversaries, so long will the Miracles and Prophecies of both the Testaments, continue to stare full in the Face of *Infidelity* and *Atheism*.

OUT of a multitude that might yet be named, give me leave just to mention one more Advantage to the Cause of Christianity, accruing from human Learning, and it is this. In the ancient heathen Writers we see the utmost Fruits which the most exalted natural Parts, refined and improved by the greatest Care and Industry, could possibly produce. Thence we learn, that the more refined Arts and Sciences were indeed brought by them to their utmost Height; but at the same time we learn from them this amazing Truth,—that those ancient Nations that did the greatest Honour to human Nature, by the Invention of Arts and Sciences; did yet do the greatest Dis-
honour

honour to it, by those absurd Systems of Religion which they embraced. For 'tis amazingly remarkable, that the politest and most learned Nations of Antiquity, embraced by far the most absurd Notions of Religion: and the more polite and refined they were in regard to Arts and Sciences; the more stupid and absurd were they, in point of Religion. For *Egypt*, that Mother of Arts and Sciences, (as *Macrobius* styles her) embraced a Religion by far more stupidly absurd and ridiculous, than that of either the *Greeks* or *Romans*; who borrowed both their Learning and Religion—principally from *Egypt*. This Argument, now, for the Use and Necessity of a divine Revelation, can be drawn only, from a Survey of human Literature; and let those Men who cry up the All-sufficiency of human Reason in point of Religion, mark this; and remember, that the finest Reasoners in every thing else, did, while they remained destitute of Revelation, both *think* and *practise*—the most flagrant Absurdities in regard to Religion.

I shall conclude all I have said concerning the Usefulness of human Learning to the Cause of Christianity, with *this* Observation: that all we have here advanced, was most amply confirmed by the Conduct and Politics of the Apostate Emperor *Julian*. This Infidel Prince having seen the Folly and ill Success of his Predecessors, in trying to extirpate Christianity by means of Flames and Tortures,—he bethought himself of a yet more dangerous Device: for being of a calm Head; quite cool and deliberate; a Man of great Learning,—and yet a most inveterate Foe to Christianity;—He could think of *no* Method so likely to extirpate and banish the Christian Faith, as the forbidding the Christians to instruct their Children in human Learning. But, as the Devil seems always doomed to betray himself by *some* Inadvertence or another; so—this Apostate *Julian* had, at the same time, the Folly to give this public Reason for his Decree. “Because the Christians, says
 “he, turn our own Authors upon us;—by being versed in
 “*our* Learning, and in *our* Antiquities, they stab us with our
 “own Swords; and wound us with Arrows drawn out of
 “our

“our own Quivers.” Therefore to conclude this Head in one short Word.

WE see, upon the whole, that the Attainment of human Learning, was, by the Holy Ghost itself, pronounced an Accomplishment even in so inspired a Person as *Moses*. We have seen the Reasons, why, it might justly merit so high an *Exco-mium*; and to conclude all, I have observed to you, how terribly our Progress in human Learning was dreaded, by that Apostate heathen Emperor, who was the most learned, the ablest, and the most subtle Adversary that Christianity ever met with. Give me leave, now, to draw a few Inferences from the whole, and so to conclude.

IN the first place then, we may here see the Folly of those modern *Enthusiasts*, who decry the use of all human Learning;—ridicule those whom they apprehend to be versed in it;—and in contempt call them Letter-learned Divines: as if human Learning, and the Grace of God, could never subsist together, even though *we see* they were united, in so many of the inspired Writers, particularly in *Moses*. Let these Men remember, that notwithstanding their idle Dreams, human Literature, is here, not only recommended by the holy Spirit, but also most justly dreaded by the ablest Enemy to the Faith, that Antiquity ever produced. 'Tis plain therefore, that nothing but either Knavery, Folly, or Madness, can make any Man undervalue it.

2dly, LET us here contemplate the manifest Difference between Christianity and all vain and false Religions. False Religion, Imposture, and Enthusiasm, do as naturally fly from Learning and Knowledge, as Wickedness hates the Light.—While Christianity, true and sound Christianity, *desires* nothing more, calls out for nothing so much, as to be brought to the Light, and to be fairly tried and examined by it. And no wonder; for as Christianity came from *him* who is the Fountain-head both of Art and Nature, 'tis reasonable to imagine that all Discoveries both of *Art and Nature*—must daily tend, more and more to enlighten and confirm the *Christian* Faith.

BUT

BUT now to conclude all. You have seen that human Learning, or Skill in the Sciences, is that which gives a kind of *Ubiquity* to the Soul of Man, by enabling it at any time to transport itself into any of the vast Varieties of Art and Nature. You have seen that it is the *Handmaid* of *Christianity*, and a necessary Attendant upon the sacred Writings themselves. And when I appeared before you this time twelve-month, in the Capacity of your Preacher, as I now do, I then fully proved to you—that *the Faith and Practice of a Christian, is the only true Foundation of rational Liberty*: for 'tis *that*, and *that alone*, that can deliver us from the Bondage of Sin in *this* World, and from the Guilt and Punishment of it—in the World to come. The upshot of all then, is plainly this: 'tis only by Learning, Virtue, and Piety, that this Society of ours can attain to the true and proper Freedom and Liberty of rational Beings; and thereby, become, in *Truth* and *Reality*, what we are *now* in *Name*. To Learning indeed, in any great Extent, we cannot *all* of us arrive, because our Country calls upon us, to serve her, in different Shapes and Forms, and by following divers and various Professions. But, to Virtue, Faith, and Piety,—we may *all* of us attain, if *we* think fit. And let me tell you, my Brethren, that the Faith and Practice of a Christian, is a more glorious Ornament to the Soul of Man, and will crown it with a brighter Crown, than all the Learning of *Italy* and *Greece*;—yea—than all the Wisdom of the *Egyptians*. For sound Religion, which *Solomon*, in one Word rightly calls *Wisdom*; “shall be an Ornament of Grace unto thy Head, and Chains about thy Neck. She “is a Tree of Life unto them that lay hold upon her, and “happy is every one that retaineth her.” To this Glory and Happiness—God grant that *we* may all attain, thro' the Merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour; to whom with the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most justly due, all Honour and Glory, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, now, and for evermore. *Amen.*

4 AP 65

F I N I S.